

FREDERICK COUNTY'S FUTURE

MANY PLACES, ONE COMMUNITY

A COMPREHENSIVE PLAN FOR FREDERICK COUNTY MARYLAND



PUBLIC HEARING DRAFT PLAN

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

MAY 2009

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INTRODUCTION

Growth Management Initiatives

The Frederick Board of County Commissioners (BoCC) launched its Growth Management Initiative in January 2008 to update the Countywide Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Map, as well as strengthen the Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance. Soon after, with guidance from the Division of Planning, the Frederick County Planning Commission began preparation of a draft plan to update the Countywide Comprehensive Plan. The Planning Commission will hold a public hearing on a recommended plan in July, 2009 and then forward it to the BoCC. The BoCC will then conduct its own review and public hearing process prior to adopting the final Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Map.

County Comprehensive Plan

This Plan updates the 1998 Countywide Comprehensive Plan, which was primarily a policy document and provided guidance for the subsequent updates of the County's eight region plans. In addition to updating goals, policies, and action recommendations, this Plan initiates a new planning process to develop a countywide land use plan map that will consolidate what has been previously identified within the eight separate region plans that have been most recently updated between 1997 and 2008.

The organization of this Plan departs from the traditional list of comprehensive plan elements (environmental features, community facilities, transportation, and land use) that typically define the individual chapters of a plan. Both the format of this Plan as well as the injection of new and revised planning concepts has established this Plan as a new benchmark rather than merely updating the previous 1998 Countywide Plan.

State Planning Mandates

This Plan addresses the recent State mandates from House Bill 1141 and House Bill 2, which require the inclusion of a Water Resources Element, a Priority Preservation Plan, and a Workforce Housing Element within a jurisdictions comprehensive plan.

HOW TO PARTICIPATE IN THE REVIEW PROCESS

Comments on the Public Hearing Draft Plan should be forwarded to the Division of Planning by July 15, 2009 so they may be considered by the County Planning Commission as part of their review and approval of a Recommended Plan that will be forwarded to the Board of County Commissioners.

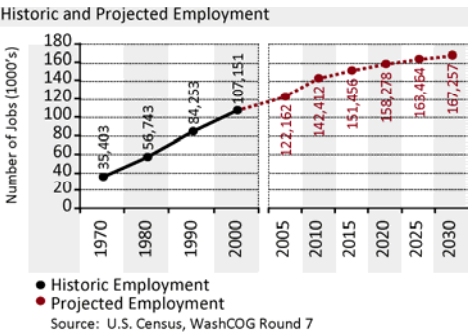
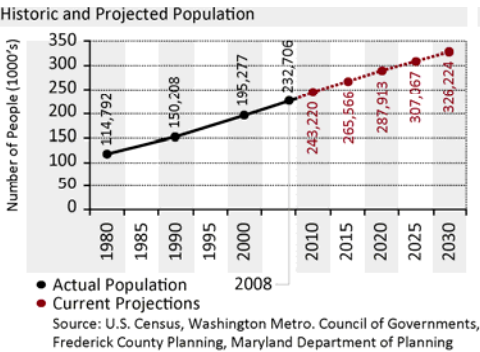
Planning Commission Public Hearing

Wednesday July 15, 2009 at 7:00 pm, Winchester Hall, Frederick

- Attend the Planning Commission public hearing and provide oral testimony
- Submit written comments via regular mail to the Division of Planning
- E-mail us at planningandzoning@fredco-md.net
- Fill out the Online Survey through our web page at www.co.frederick.md.us/planning

WHAT ARE WE PLANNING FOR?

Understanding the future of Frederick County can only occur with understanding the direction and magnitude of growth taking place in Washington metropolitan region, of which Frederick is a part of. The employment and population growth occurring within the metropolitan region has and will continue to directly influence growth and development within the County. Provided below are the historic and projected growth for the County's employment and population.



GENERAL PLAN COMPONENTS

A new mapping component of this Plan illustrates three general plan components as a way to provide a general version of the traditional land use plan map. This map clearly defines the community growth areas relative to the agricultural lands and the County's natural resource areas.

Community Plan

This component continues to implement the basic structure of the County's Community Concept first described in the County's 1972 Comprehensive Plan. The Community Concept described a hierarchy of communities, regional, district, and rural that were defined by a number of parameters including population and level of community facilities.

The new Community Concept will continue to carry on the strategies of encouraging compact growth areas and supporting identifiable communities. The primary change from the original Community Concept is the focus on a broader definition of Community Growth Areas (CGA's) rather than a strict hierarchical structure.

Municipal Growth Areas – Most of the County's municipalities continue to provide a logical location for managed growth both within their existing municipal borders and in surrounding lands for future annexation. The General Plan highlights the existing municipal boundary and the future growth area that would be controlled by the municipality through the annexation process.

Unincorporated Growth Area – There are several existing communities under the County's jurisdiction that have served as a foundation for growth. Many have a historic "downtown" core, schools, and water/sewer infrastructure to support additional growth.

Agricultural and Rural Communities Plan

This component seeks to emphasize the importance of agriculture and the general rural character of the County that is not necessarily in agricultural use. The features of this component include:

Agricultural/Rural Area – This encompasses a broad area of the County including active agricultural uses, fallow lands, and scattered residences that have been developed from larger farm parcels.

Priority Preservation Area – There are five (5) areas delineated in the County. The focus of these areas is to create larger contiguous areas of preservation easements that also protect the significant prime agricultural soils.

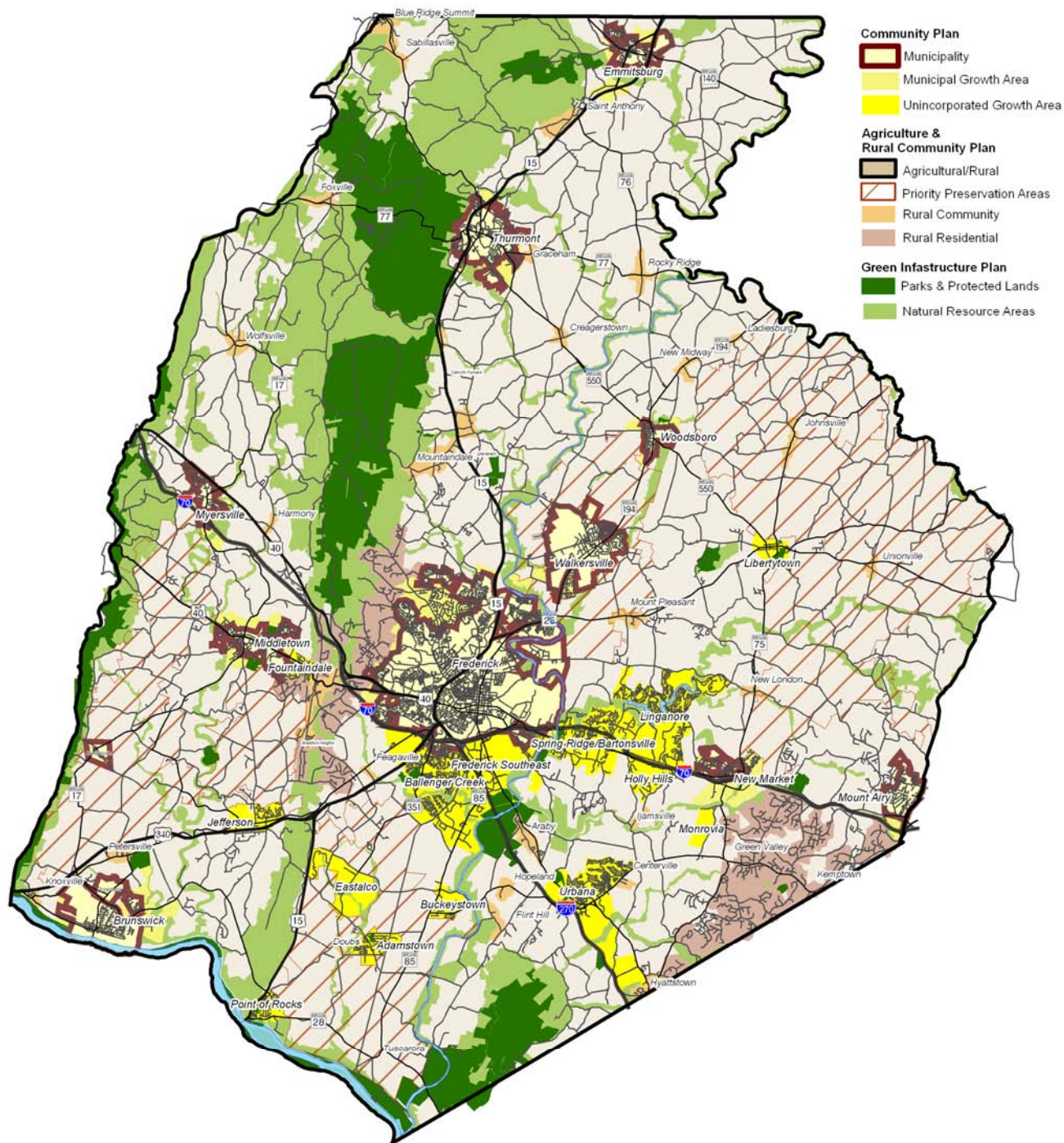
Rural Communities – These are cross road communities located throughout the Agricultural/Rural area and have historically supported the surrounding agricultural community. Where appropriate some of these communities may experience limited growth in the context of supporting the local agricultural community.

Green Infrastructure Plan

This component focuses on the County's network of natural resources and protected lands. This allows for the identification of gaps in the network and as a way to identify linkages within and connecting the community growth areas.

Natural Resource Areas – Delineates the primary environmental features including the mountain areas (encompasses forestland and steep slopes) and major stream corridors.

Parks and Protected Lands – Highlights the state and federal parks and the County's regional parks. Other protected lands include municipal watershed properties and Sugarloaf Mountain, which is privately owned.





HOW WE ARE PLANNING

A departure from the organization of previous County comprehensive plans is the elimination of the reference to a Volume I (Countywide Comprehensive Plan) and a Volume II (Region Plans), which has been used by the County since its 1984 Plan update. For the detailed land use plan mapping, this Plan will include a countywide land use plan map that will consolidate what has been previously identified within the eight separate region plans that have previously comprised the Volume II of the County Comprehensive Plan. This Plan establishes a Community Planning process that will allow for plan updates to occur at three levels: Countywide Plan, Community Plans, and Corridor Plans.

Countywide Plan

The Countywide Plan as a whole would be updated on a regular cycle consistent with the State requirement, which is currently every six (6) years. The State requires that each jurisdiction review its comprehensive plan and if necessary revise and update it. The County's process will accommodate amendments to the Countywide Plan between the comprehensive update that would occur every six years. The interim amendments would allow for revisions to: the goals, policies, and actions items; the background data, text; or the maps.

The Plan includes planning region profiles that provide some background data and an overview of the General Plan components for that region. These profiles also include issues and planning concepts from prior region plans in an effort to incorporate them into subsequent community plans. For each region profile are brief descriptions of each Community Growth Area including Municipal Growth Areas and Unincorporated Growth Areas. These descriptions are not meant to serve as a detailed plan but to provide a general overview of the community and to identify any issues that would need to be addressed in a subsequent community plan.

Community Plans

Revisions to the land use plan will be addressed through updates of individual community growth areas rather than through region plans. The plan update process and schedule for Municipal Growth Areas would be determined by the respective municipality and would be coordinated with the County. Once a municipal plan update has progressed to the municipality's elected officials the County would initiate its Countywide Plan amendment process. Any changes to the community growth boundary and/or land use designations adopted as part of the municipal plan update would be reviewed by the County Planning Commission and Board of County Commissioners and adopted as an amendment to the Countywide Plan.

The County will be responsible for preparing updates for community plans for the Unincorporated Growth Areas. A primary purpose for these community plans is to explore design concepts, redevelopment opportunities, and development staging in greater detail than described in the Countywide Plan. The process will be similar to the small area plan process the County has used in previous region plan updates. The result of this will produce a stand alone community plan document that would amend the Countywide Plan land use plan.

This process would also provide an opportunity to conduct a detailed planning effort for the Rural Communities, which while not considered as growth areas may have land use and design issues that could be addressed in a detailed plan for the community.

Corridor Plans

Like the Community Plans, the Countywide Plan will be updated through the preparation of Corridor Plans. The purpose of the Corridor Plans will be to focus on smaller areas to address in more detail issues related to design elements, street networks, etc. in addition to the overall land use plan designations and zoning. This process will be especially useful to address the application of redevelopment and transit oriented design concepts. The 'Corridors' are primarily situated along a highway corridor and may either be part of a single growth area or include portions of adjoining growth areas. The specific study area for a Corridor Plan would be determined at the time a plan is initiated.





PLAN THEMES

This Plan is organized around nine themes. The themes provide an opportunity to focus on significant aspects of the County that have, in previous plans, been given very little attention. Also, a format based on themes creates a more dynamic Plan document where individual themes can stand alone in terms of page numbering to facilitate periodic amendments. The first page of each theme includes an Amendment Status block to document subsequent amendments to the goals/policies/action items, maps, and/or background information for that theme. This allows for the insertion of new theme/chapters in response to either new state requirements or as otherwise identified by the County.

01 Introduction

This Plan builds on 50 years of planning history of the County dating to the County's first land use plan, which was adopted in January 1959. Frederick County has experienced numerous changes and transitions during the past 50 years that have taken the County from its predominantly rural, small town, agricultural roots to a suburbanizing bedroom community, to a maturing county with an established employment base and a prominent community in the City of Frederick. Throughout these transitions Frederick County has remained rooted in its rural and agricultural heritage that continue to support its rural communities, its small but growing towns, and a very dynamic historic downtown in the City of Frederick.

Looking ahead 50 years, Frederick County faces the challenge of maintaining its rural and agricultural heritage and its sense of community while balancing its growing role as an employment center. As a maturing suburban/urban community the County will have opportunities to accommodate and focus growth in a manner that maintains our rural areas and strengthens our communities.

02 Planning Framework and Background

This Plan presents a new structure and organization of the Comprehensive Plan document to provide a clearer framework for its implementation. This chapter provides an overview of the Plan's structure, including vision statements, themes, goals, policies, and action items. The framework of the Plan introduces General Plan Components and mapping that will illustrate community growth areas, green infrastructure, and the agricultural lands.

Further supporting the framework for planning in the County is a description of the County's context in the larger metropolitan region and a summary of the background trends that will influence growth and development in the County over the next 25 years. This chapter concludes with a vision for the County that sets the stage for the story of how Frederick County will meet the future challenges.

03 Conserving Our Natural Resources and Green Infrastructure

The County strives to provide a high quality environment in which to live and work includes the protection and conservation of our Green Infrastructure, our natural resources: forestlands, mountains, streams, rivers, and wetlands. The County's Green Infrastructure concept will help shape the pattern, location, and type of new development in Frederick County and seek opportunities to establish or enhance connections between natural areas.

This chapter attempts to identify, designate and protect key natural resources, sensitive environmental elements, and unique habitats, while still recognizing the economic value of land as a development asset. Included are sections on Green Infrastructure, streams and their buffers, wetlands, floodplains, the Monocacy River, forestlands, steep slopes, habitats of rare or threatened species, and areas of limestone rock.

04 Protecting and Preserving Our Heritage

This chapter of the Comprehensive Plan contains Goals, Policies, and Action Items regarding heritage preservation, including historic properties, scenic and cultural landscapes, and heritage tourism. An overview of the County's history sets the scene for a summary of historic preservation activities. The Historic Preservation Plan, the Historic Preservation Ordinance, the County Register of Historic Places and the Historic Preservation Commission's responsibilities are described. Related initiatives in which the County is involved are the Heart of the Civil War Heritage Area, the Journey Through Hallowed Ground, and the Maryland Historic National Road. In the conclusion of this chapter tools and actions for future expansion of heritage preservation, including the possible inclusion of archeological site protection and preparation of a countywide historic architecture inventory book are described.

05 Preserving Our Agricultural and Rural Community

The goals, policies and action items necessary to plan for a continued vibrant and viable agricultural community are provided for in this chapter. In addition to describing the trends of the agricultural economy this chapter includes the programs that have been instituted to preserve land in Frederick County and a new State Planning requirement for a Priority Preservation Plan. The Priority Preservation Plan contains an implementation strategy; which will require specific studies or action for its implementation and to reach the County goal of placing 100,000 acres under protective easement by the year 2020.

Plan Highlights

- Prepares a Priority Preservation Plan that identifies five Priority Preservation Areas to focus agricultural preservation efforts.





06 Providing Transportation Choices

An important purpose of this chapter is the consideration of all modes of transportation in addressing the mobility needs of the County. This is a significant departure from previous County plans that focused solely on highways. While this Plan recognizes that automobiles will remain as the most prevalent means of transportation it also emphasizes the need to provide for a more balanced transportation system. This chapter will provide an overview of long range transportation improvements for the following: Highways, Public Transportation, Pedestrian and Bicycle Facilities

Plan Highlights

- Advocates Transit Oriented Development in the form of higher-density mixed use neighborhoods in appropriate locations throughout the County
- Introduces the concept of Travel Demand Management as an alternative mitigation strategy to expansion of road capacity

07 Serving Our Citizens

This chapter provides an overview of the County's services and facilities that serve our citizens. Background information is provided describing the current facilities and projected needs. Since the various facilities and services do not all fit into the same category this chapter is divided into three elements as follows: Community Facilities – schools, parks, library, public safety, and human services, Public Utilities – solid waste management and water/sewer service, Affordable Housing – addresses workforce housing.

Plan Highlights

- Includes a Human Services element
- Lays out siting principles for where to locate community facilities to support community growth areas

08 Supporting a Diversified Economy

The purpose of this chapter is to highlight the County's economic diversity. The chapter provides background on Frederick County's current economic conditions and its focus for economic development including targeted industries and projected growth industries. The goals, policies and action items provided are in keeping with the County's Economic Development mission to support, retain, foster the growth of existing businesses and to attract new business that enable Frederick County residents to work where they live.

Plan Highlights

- This is a new part of the Comprehensive Plan to better integrate the County's goals and strategies for economic development into the broader focus of the Comprehensive Plan

09 Assessing Our Water Resources

This chapter summarizes the County's Water Resources Plan in order to coordinate growth management and water resources planning efforts in the Comprehensive Plan. The Water Resources Plan primarily addresses the County owned and operated water and wastewater systems although data is included for municipal systems and municipal growth areas. The County's Plan addresses the requirement for a Water Resources Element for the Town of Burkittsville and the Village of Rosemont.

The Water Resources Plan is divided into three sections: Drinking Water Assessment, Wastewater Assessment, and Managing Stormwater and Non-point Source Pollution

Plan Highlights

- New part of the Plan, mandated by the State, addressing the ability of drinking water resources and wastewater treatment to accommodate new development.
- Compares the development potential of the community growth areas with current drinking water and wastewater treatment capacities.

10 Managing Our Growth

This chapter establishes both the broad planning goals and the targeted land use policies necessary to ensure that Frederick County's neighborhoods and communities can continue to grow and develop in ways that improve the quality of life for all residents. The identification of Community Growth Areas, the institution of Development Staging Principles and Mechanisms, and the definition and mapping of Land Use Designations are each discussed in this chapter presenting a clear and understandable guide for current and future elected officials, citizens, planners, and land developers.

Plan Highlights

- **Where will future growth occur?** This Plan maintains the Community Concept first established in the County's 1972 Plan that seeks to focus growth in designated Municipal Growth Areas and Unincorporated Growth Areas.
- **What form will new growth take?** This Plan proposes several Development Principles to support higher densities consistent with Smart Growth, mixed land uses, and a focus on redevelopment opportunities.
- **When and at what rate will new growth take place?** This Plan introduces a Development Staging concept to address the timing of new development relative to the availability of community services and facilities.
- **How will new growth take form in our communities?** This question address how new development could be designed.





11 Community and Corridor Plans

This chapter provides an overview of the new planning process proposed by this Plan that focuses subsequent plan updates on the individual community growth areas and on corridors. This chapter includes brief profiles of the traditional planning regions and the Community Growth Areas.

The profiles of the planning regions and the community growth areas within the respective regions are meant to provide general background data and information. While the planning regions will no longer be the basis of subsequent plan updates, it was recognized that profiling the planning regions provide a link to prior region plans and this Countywide Plan. In addition, it provides an opportunity to associate historical demographic and development data as well as interject certain land use issues and opportunities that have been identified in a particular region plan.

Plan Highlights

- Includes profiles and development potential for each of the 22 community growth areas.
- Planning for community growth areas around municipalities will be guided by the municipal planning process and the planning goals of each municipality.
- Establishes a plan update process to maintain consistency between municipal master plans and the County Comprehensive Plan.

12 Implementation

To achieve the goals and realize the vision as set forth in this plan, Frederick County's leaders will need to embrace the policies and make progress toward fulfilling the action items as laid out in the respective chapters. This chapter identifies those action items and assigns a general timeframe for implementation. In addition to the specific action items, this chapter defines overarching or general strategies for implementation that will guide the County in its effort to achieve the vision.

Plan Highlights

- Provides a new "Action Item Implementation Matrix" to reinforce the interrelationship between the chapter themes and to clearly lay out the steps necessary to implement the Plan.



Frederick County

Division of Planning

12 East Church Street

Winchester Hall, 2nd Floor

(301) 600-1138

<http://www.co.frederick.md.us/planning>



Planning Commission Public Hearing

Wednesday July 15, 2009 at 7:00 pm

Map displays and speaker sign-up available at 6:00 pm

12 East Church Street, Winchester Hall

Frederick, MD 21701

How you can participate in the plan update process:

Attend the Planning Commission public hearing and provide oral testimony

Submit written comments via regular mail to the Division of Planning

E-mail us at planningandzoning@fredco-md.net

Fill out the Online Survey through our web page at www.co.frederick.md.us/planning